CALHOUN COUNTY COORDINATED PUBLIC TRANSIT HUMAN SERVICE AGENCY PLAN



Table of Contents

1.	Introduction	3
	Elderly and Persons with Disabilities Program (Section 5310)	3
2.	Calhoun County	4
3.	Assessment of Available Services	7
4.	Assessment of Transportation Needs	11
5.	Goals, Strategies, and Potential Projects	13
	Goals	13
	Strategies	14
	Potential Projects	14
6.	Priorities for Implementation	15
7.	Participants, Planning Process and Plan Approval	16

1

List of Figures

Figure 2-1	Calhoun County and Surrounding Area	4
Figure 2-2	Calhoun County Cities, Villages and Townships	5

List of Tables

Table 2-1	Population of Calhoun County Cities, Villages and Townships	6
Table 3-1	Calhoun County Primary Transportation Providers	8
Table 4-1	Transportation Needs Indicators	11
Table 7-1	Plan Update Participants	16

1. Introduction

Historically, lack of transportation options have been reported as a barrier to accessing services, employment, and other activities for Calhoun County residents, particularly for persons with disabilities, senior citizens, and persons with low incomes. Federal transit law, as amended by MAP-21, requires that projects selected for funding under the Section 5310 program be "included in a locally developed, coordinated public transit-human services transportation plan" and that the plan be "developed and approved through a process that includes participation by seniors, individuals with disabilities, representatives of public, private, and nonprofit transportation and human services providers and other members of the public." One of the MAP-21 requirements is that projects developed in the programs listed above must be a part of a "locally developed coordinated public transit-human services transportation plan". The goal of this plan is to identify current transportation barriers in Calhoun County, and to then identify opportunities to coordinate existing services more effectively to better serve the transportation needs of county residents. The plan is intended to be flexible; the process and information contained in this plan may change over time as local entities continue to collaborate on the needs of an effective public transit-human service transportation plan. This is the second update of the Calhoun County Coordinated Public Transit -- Human Service Agency Plan that was originally developed in 2007. The plan update was conducted with the input of a group of Calhoun County stakeholders and organized by Battle Creek Transit, acting as the lead agency.

A plan update is needed in order for the county's public transportation providers to be eligible for 5310 funding. The following is a brief description of the funding program that requires a Coordinated Public Transit – Human Service Agency Plan.

Elderly and Persons with Disabilities Program (Section 5310)

Section 5310 provides funds to meet special transportation needs of elderly persons and persons with disabilities. Funds are apportioned to the states annually by a formula based on the number of elderly persons and persons with disabilities in each state.

Capital projects are funded at up to 80 percent of eligible project costs. Eligible recipients include private nonprofit agencies, public bodies approved by the state to coordinate services for elderly persons and persons with disabilities, or public bodies that certify to the state that no nonprofit agencies are available in an area to provide the service.

2. Calhoun County

Calhoun County is located in southwest Michigan, midway between Detroit and Chicago along the I-94 corridor. The county is bordered by Jackson, Kalamazoo, Eaton, Branch and Barry counties (Figure 2-1)

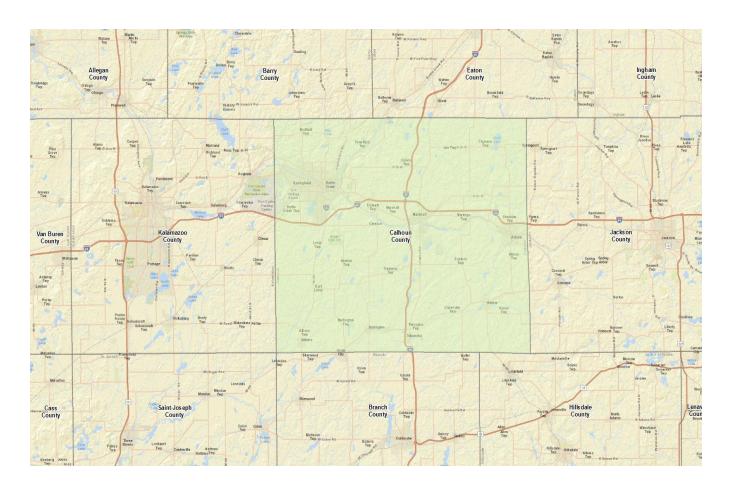


Figure 2-1
Calhoun County and Surrounding Area

Calhoun County contains four cities, Albion, Battle Creek, Marshall and Springfield (Figure 2-2). The City of Marshall is the county seat and, along with the City of Battle Creek, serves as the center for employment, social services, shopping and medical services. The City of Springfield is a small municipality encompassed by the City of Battle Creek. The City of Albion, located near the eastern county line, is somewhat isolated in terms of transportation resources from the other cities in the county. Battle Creek and Marshall both have public transportation systems. In Springfield, Battle Creek Transit provides a stop within the city limits and services in close proximity to the city boundary.



Figure 2-2
Calhoun County Cities, Villages and Townships

As shown in Table 2-1, the population of Calhoun County has declined since 2000. There have been small population increases in some of the townships but, generally, population has declined in the county's cities. Still, Calhoun County maintains a large base of manufacturing employers, a concentration of federal employees and those employed at the VA Hospital, Federal Center in Battle Creek, and FireKeepers Casino located between Battle Creek and Marshall.

Figure 2-1
Population of Calhoun County Cities, Villages and Townships

Area	2000 Census	2010 Census	Change
Albion City	9,144	8,616	-6.13%
Albion Township	1,200	1,123	-6.86%
Athens Township	2 , 571	2,554	-0.67%
Battle Creek City	53,364	52,347	-1.94%
Bedford Charter Township	9 , 51 <i>7</i>	9,357	-1.71%
Burlington Township	1,929	1,941	0.62%
Clarence Township	2,032	1,985	-2.37%
Clarendon Township	1,114	1,139	2.19%
Convis Township	1,666	1,636	-1.83%
Eckford Township	1,282	1,303	1.61%
Emmett Charter Township	11,979	11,770	-1.78%
Fredonia Township	1,723	1,626	-5.97%
Homer Village	3,010	3,015	0.17%
Lee Township	1,257	1,213	-3.63%
Leroy Township	3,240	3,712	12.72%
Marengo Township	2,131	2,213	3.71%
Marshall City	7,459	7,088	-5.23%
Marshall Township	2,922	3,115	6.20%
Newton Township	2,493	2,551	2.27%
Pennfield Charter Township	8,913	9,001	0.98%
Sheridan Township	2,116	1,936	-9.30%
Springfield City	5,189	5,260	1.35%
Tekonsha Village	1,734	1,645	-5.41%
Calhoun County	137,985	136,146	-1.35%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American FactFinder

3. Assessment of Available Services

There are several providers of transportation in the Calhoun County area. Some are more visible than others, and some are open to the general public while others are client-bases services (Table 3-1).

The cities of Battle Creek and Marshall operate the county's two public transportation systems. Battle Creek Transit (BCT) operates within the City of Battle Creek with limited stops in the adjacent townships. BCT provides fixed route service, complementary Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) demand response transportation and also demand-response van transportation to the general public. The Marshall Dial-a-Ride service is the county's other public transportation service. It provides demand response service primarily within the city limits of Marshall.

CentraCare (program of all-inclusive care for the elderly) provides transportation services to medical appointments and to their Day Center.

BC Rides, a new initiative co-founded by JONAH, is helping people without reliable transportation get to work so they can continue to support their families and build a better future for all of us.

Indian Trails, a regional bus company, operates routes that cross Calhoun County and connect to other parts of Michigan and to Chicago. The service has 27 daily published routes and is available to the general public. This service allows Calhoun County residents access to the rest of the state and Chicago.

AMTRAK is also a provider of transportation services to Calhoun County residents. AMTRAK provides rail connections to other Michigan cities and Illinois. AMTRAK currently operates eight trains per day through Battle Creek and two trains daily through Albion.

Another private provider of transportation services is LifeCare Ambulance. LifeCare provides medical trips and is available to the general public. They make trips within Calhoun County as well as trips to areas outside the county.

Battle Creek also has a privately operated taxi service that is available 24 hours a day to the general public.

There are also several other human services agencies operating in the Calhoun County area that provide various levels of client-based transportation services. These include the Community Action Agency, Community Inclusive Recreations, Area Agency on Aging, Marian Burch Adult Day Care Center and Michigan Works!. In addition, Goodwill operates a Wheels-to-Work program that accepts donated vehicles and then distributes them to individuals in need of work transportation.

Figure 3-1

Calhoun County Transportation / Human Services Providers (Based on organizations that responded to request for information)

Battle Creek Transit (Fixed Route and Demand Response)

- Public transportation provider for the City of Battle Creek.
- Operates fixed-route and demand response service.
- Fare is \$1.25 for fixed route with a \$.60 discounted fare for elderly and disabled and \$2 for ADA demand response. Demand Response (Tele-Transit) for the general public is \$7 and is discounted to \$5 after 5:00 p.m.
- The system operates fixed-route service from 5:15 a.m. 6:45 p.m. on weekdays and on Saturdays from 9:15 a.m. 5:15 p.m. Complementary ADA service operates the same hours. Tele-Transit, the non-ADA van service, operates on weekdays from 5:15 a.m. 11:30 p.m., and on Saturdays from 9:15 a.m. 4:30 p.m.
- Annual ridership is approximately 567,699 passengers.

Marshall Dial-a-Ride

- Curb to curb demand response service in the City of Marshall and surrounding townships.
- Also provides service to the City of Albion on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays.
- The fare for City of Marshall services: \$1.50/one way trip for senior citizens and persons with disabilities. All others pay \$3 fare. City of Albion service: \$1.00/one-way trip for senior citizens and persons with disabilities. All others pay \$2 fare.
- Operating hours are Monday through Friday from 7:00 a.m. 6:00 p.m. No weekend service.
- Annual ridership is approximately 30,000.
- Area of service is City of Marshall with limited portions of adjacent township. City of Albion services - Albion city residents wishing to travel to Marshall for medical appointments, grocery shopping, etc.
- Funding is received through Federal Section 5311 operating funds, State formula operating funds, city millage, farebox revenue and miscellaneous revenue.

Community Action Agency

- Human service agency providing education and children's services through its Head Start and Early Head Start programs; Foster Grandparent Program; Fatherhood/Male Involvement; Home Delivered Meals; Congregate Meals; CSFP and TEFAP food distribution; Major and Minor Home Rahab services; Home Weatherization; Transportation; Emergency Rent/Mortgage and Utility assistance.
- Serves residents of Barry, Branch, Calhoun, and St. Joseph Counties, and targets its programs and services to the specific needs of those communities.
- Last year, provided assistance to more than 15,400 children, seniors, and low-income individuals in its four-county service area.
- Vans with and without lifts are available to transport seniors over age 60 and disabled individuals 18 years of age or older to medical appointments, employment sites, congregate meal centers, grocery shopping, and other.
- They have no fares, but accept donations.
- Service is provided in the Battle Creek area Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. 4:30 p.m. and Saturday 8 a.m. 12 noon; and in the Albion area Monday through Friday from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Service must be scheduled 24 hours in advance, and is subject to availability.
- They provide approximately 40,000 trips.
- They receive funding grant funding from MDOT, Calhoun Senior Services, AAA IIIB, and through private donations.

Figure 3-1 (continued)

Calhoun County Transportation / Human Services Providers (Based on organizations that responded to request for information)

Community Inclusive Recreation

- Provides recreational and social opportunities for people with disabilities. We also provide life skills training that assists our participants live fully in the community as much as possible.
- Provides door to door transportation for over 50 programs on an annual basis.
- Provide service to the Greater Battle Creek and Marshall area.
- They do not charge for transportation.
- Times of service vary according to the program schedule.
- Their annual ridership was 3.524
- They receive specialized services funding to help support transportation services. Also receive support from Summit Pointe (local community mental health), to transport consumers involved in programs.

Marian Burch Adult Day Care Center

- An adult day care that transports individuals to and from the center throughout Calhoun County.
- Fares are including in grant rate.
- The service operates a morning route at 7:30 a.m., & 9:30 a.m., and an afternoon route at 3:00 p.m., and 5:30 p.m.
- They receive funding through various funding agencies, Region 3B & waiver, Veteran's Administration, private pay, and senior millage.

Michigan Department of Human Services - Calhoun County

- Provides Food, cash, medical, daycare, and emergency assistance as well as child welfare services.
- Calhoun DHS provides transportation to client to/from medical appointments with their area of service being State of Michigan.
- There is no cost to the client; funding comes from Medicaid.
- Hours are typically Monday through Friday, 6 a.m. to 6 p.m.
- Ridership is approximately 360.

Summit Pointe

- Outpatient mental health services.
- No transportation services are provided.

Calhoun County Senior Services

- Senior services contracts with Community Action to provide county-wide van transportation for adults 60 years and above.
- They are a funder of services provided by contract agencies. They support the Marshall Dial-A-Ride serving Albion.
- No fees are charged.
- Hours are Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. and Saturday mornings.
- Ridership was 550 unduplicated; 23,378 one-way rides.
- Funding is provided through senior millage property tax -0.7452 mills.

Concorde Transportation

- Provide transportation to work and home from Battle Creek residents and also provide airport runs to Detroit, Lansing, Grand Rapids, and Kalamazoo as well as specialized.
- Fares are: Work to home roundtrip \$15 per day; Airport start at \$75 route trip; and specialized starting at \$35 per hour (will go where needed).
- Provides service 24 hours a day.
- Ridership is approximately 50 to 75 people.
- Funding is direct client pay.

Figure 3-1 (continued)

Calhoun County Transportation / Human Services Providers (Based on organizations that responded to request for information)

Disability Network Southwest Michigan

- Provides information and assistance on disability issues, independent living supports, social security benefits counseling, nursing facility transition services, assistance with assistive technology, presentations & workshops, ADA compliance and technical assistance. Services are primarily to person with disabilities and the community.
- Provides service to an eight county areas in Southwest Michigan.
- No transportation services are provided.
- Funding is received through state and federal grants, United Way funding, private foundation grants and donations.

B & W Charters Inc.

- Provides transportation through charters, tours, shuttles, etc. to the continental US & Canada.
- Fares and hours vary based on service provided.
- Funding is discretionary spending.

The Salvation Army

- Provides food, rent, personal care items, clothing referrals, transportation, and coats.
- Provides in-town triptiks or 12 ride bus passes as available at no charge to recipient for those with a new job who live on the bus route and has not received first paycheck. TripTiks are used to aid patrons to get home during inclement weather.
- The service is available while local buses are running and only within the Battle Creek public transit service area.
- There is no funding as state funding was taken away when current governor initially took office.

Dean Trailways of Michigan

- Provides motor coach and black car service 24/7 based on charter requests of customers within the continental US.
- Private company paid by customers who charter the vehicles and fares vary based on service provided.

4. Assessment of Transportation Needs

One means of quantifying the transportation needs of residents of Calhoun County is through demographics as collected by the U.S. Census Bureau (Table 4-1). The portion of the population that is elderly, has a disability or a low income are the segments of the population that are often considered transportation disadvantaged. From the U. S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey of 2010, the estimated population of Calhoun County is 136,146. Of the total population, just over 20,000 residents are 65 years or older. These are often people who no longer drive or limit their amount of driving. In Calhoun County, approximately 15 percent of the population that is five years and over has some type of disability. This represents 20,771 people; a large portion of the adults in the segment of the population may not be able to drive. There are also a large number of low-income households in the county. In Calhoun County, there are nearly 8,800 households living with incomes below the poverty level. In addition, there are approximately 3,604 households without access to a vehicle. Even if these three groups of people overlap somewhat, it is evident that there are a large number of people in Calhoun County that are in need of assistance in meeting their transportation needs.

Table 4-1
Transportation Need Indicators

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Indicator	Number	Percent
Total Population	136,146	100.0
65 years and over	20,109	14.7
Population 5 Years & Over	127,394	100.0
With a disability	20,771	15.3
Civilian Labor Force	66,363	61.7
Unemployed	9,909	14.9
Total Households	54,016	100.0
Income below poverty level	8,751	16.2
No vehicle available	3,604	6.7

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2010 Census American FactFinder

As shown in the Assessment of Available Services, there are a number of entities providing transportation services in the Calhoun County area. Still, there are unmet needs. The public transportation providers have limited service areas and the other agencies and private providers are either not practical in terms of cost for those needing transportation or have limited hours and/or eligibility requirements that make them unavailable to those needing transportation.

The needs and gaps in services as identified by the stakeholders are as follows:

- Transportation outside Calhoun County and for rural residents.
 - Transit outside the City of Battle Creek is minimal at best often restricted by demographic, trip purpose, or cost.
 - Stakeholders noted that just because people reside in a particular county, does not mean that their transportation needs end at the county boundary.
 - There is no public transportation available for rural residents outside the Battle Creek Transit and Marshall Dial-a-Ride service areas such as Homer and Tekonsha and within Albion.
- Transportation service later in the evening than exist with current public transportation services. Battle Creek Transit and Marshall Dial-a-Ride have limited service hours and do not have services that are conducive for getting to and from work for those working jobs that are not traditional work hours.
 - Stakeholders noted that affordable transportation is lacking for after hours for 2nd and 3rd shifts, Saturdays, and Sundays in order for people to access employment.
 - Add Sunday bus service as people work and shop on Sunday's as well.
 - Stakeholders also noted that there is a gap in transportation services for parents who need to take children to early childhood programming throughout the area.
 - Re-establish the south side circulator and express services including Sundays.
 - Replace Battle Creek Transit hourly routes with half hour routes.
- Improve access to Battle Creek Transit Tele-Transit.
 - Reduce fare for ADA riders to reduce the huge delays and outright service cancellations caused by numerous wheelchair-bound riders on regular service routes.
- Improve Battle Creek Transit's transfer process.
 - Allow riders to get off and on the same route.
 - Increase the number of hours that a transfer can be used; consider an all-day transfer (higher fare/different color).
- Increase the number of Battle Creek Transit shelters as well as maintenance.
 - No mountains of snow covering bus stops and shelters.
 - No knocking down shelters and not replacing them.

- More easily-accessed and available information about existing transportation services.
 - Stakeholders noted that 211 still is not a reliable information source for transport. Funding restrictions that restrict service areas so no one service can give a rider of any age service across county or outside county.
 - Post Battle Creek Transit delays and cancellations in real-time through a website or hotline phone number for current route information and interruptions.
- Affordable transportation to doctor appointments.

5. Goals, Strategies and Potential Projects

A group of stakeholders, including members of the general public, updated the plan goals, strategies and potential projects.

Goals

Goals for the planning process were identified as the following:

- A common funding and fare structure among the few services providers;
- Accessibility to transportation throughout Calhoun County;
- Exploration of funding to provide gap transportation services, i.e. cross county lines;
- Coordinate efforts amongst the various groups currently discussing transportation needs.
 Community coordination and utilizing resources effectively; a comprehensive public transportation system.
- Identify possible providers to service the segment of our community that require off time services.
- Establish funding that would make affordable transportation to doctor appointments easier to implement;
- More drivers, buses, and efficient and safe drop off stops at key locations for Battle Creek Transit:
- Up-to-date and adequately translated information for Battle Creek Transit routes/schedules;
- The County itself should take the lead in committing to ensure there is affordable, accessible, convenient transportation for all residents of Calhoun County to use in order to meet their basic human needs including employment and access to food, medical care, shopping, and recreation. We live and work in an urbanized area that is larger than just the City boundaries. The goal should be for transit to be available in some form all over the community.

Strategies

Stakeholder and public participants developed the following strategies used to identify projects for this coordinated Public Transit-Human Service Agency Plan. These strategies were intended to be concepts upon which projects could be identified.

- Improve existing transportation service provided:
 - Talk with / survey the current population who utilize transportation systems and companies they work for to make sure you have effective routes and schedules;
 - In addition to seeking input from clients, also seek input from partners and funders. Identify the most needed and doable projects and do them;
 - Talk with employers in the Industrial Park area along with staffing agencies for input;
 - Get target destination organizations involved in planning/funding services for which they
 may be a sole source services, i.e. dialysis services, large department stores such as Meijer
 and Walmart;
 - Create opportunities for agencies/organizations interested in solving local transportation gaps and needs to work together to avoid duplication of services;
 - In addition to needing affordable transportation, is the issue that several elderly also need caregiver assistance to and from doctor appointments;
 - Increase communication on policies, changes, and general information for Battle Creek Transit;
 - Solicitation of passenger and driver input.
 - Look at what other counties do to provide transit for their residents and choose some best practice models for communities of similar size and geography. Might want to consider some rural strategies with some urban strategies.

Potential Projects

The following is a list of the projects identified by the stakeholders. It is anticipated that the list of projects will continue to grow and evolve as coordination among stakeholders and the public continues.

- Volunteer medical transport for clients going to Kalamazoo, Ann Arbor, Jackson, and Lansing;
- Connection between cities within the county;
- Countywide bus services including communities of Battle Creek, Marshall, Albion, Homer, and Tekonsha;
- Transportation that can cross county lines i.e., medical appointments in Kalamazoo;
- Affordable transportation after hours and Sundays i.e. 24/7 to and from work;
- Restarting Battle Creek Transit's Express and Circulator routes;
- Fully accessible and accommodating transportation for the disabled, deaf, and blind;
- Bus shelters for those who utilize public transportation, especially in inclement weather;
- Partnership with a home health agency to provide aides to assist with appointments;
- Funding to help non-profit agencies provide passes for transportation assistance;
- Hold town meetings with management, drivers, and riders;
- Don't be afraid to take risks—try something vs nothing. Pilot projects.
- Possible expansion of line-haul and complimentary ADA service to surrounding Battle Creek area townships.
- Analyze existing BCT routes for possible adjustments to allow for increased on-time service.
- Participate in the Governor's Regional Prosperity Grant planning process for Region 8 (possible county-to-county service).

6. Priorities for Implementation

The projects from the previous section were prioritized by the stakeholder group. The projects were first put into one of three groups and then prioritized within those groups.

The short-term projects, in their order of priority, were as follows:

- 1. Affordable transportation after hours and Sundays i.e. 24/7 to and from work.
- 2. Bus shelters for those who utilize public transportation, especially in inclement weather.
- 3. Analyze existing BCT routes for possible adjustments to allow for increased on-time service.
- 4. Fully accessible and accommodating transportation for the disabled, deaf, and blind.
- 5. Volunteer medical transport for clients going to Kalamazoo, Ann Arbor, Jackson, and Lansing.
- 6. Restarting Battle Creek Transit's Express and Circulator routes.
- 7. Participate in the Governor's Regional Prosperity Grant planning process for Region 8 (possible county-to-county service).
- 8. Transportation that can cross county lines i.e., medical appointments in Kalamazoo.

The mid-term projects in order of priority are:

- 1. Funding to help non-profit agencies provide passes for transportation.
- 2. Partnership with a home health agency to provide aides to assist with appointments.
- Possible expansion of line-haul and complimentary ADA service to surrounding Battle Creek area townships.
- 4. Don't be afraid to take risks—try something vs nothing. Pilot projects.
- 5. Hold town meetings with management, drivers, and riders.

The projects that were considered long-term and in need of further definition, in no particular order, are:

- Countywide bus services including communities of Battle Creek, Marshall, Albion, Homer, and Tekonsha.
- Connection between cities within the county.

7. Participants, Planning Process, and Plan Approval

Battle Creek Transit (BCT) assumed the role of lead agency in the update of the Calhoun County Coordinated Public Transit – Human Service Agency Plan. A group of stakeholders were also involved in the planning processes. The stakeholders included representatives of social service agencies and organizations; public, private, and non-profit transportation providers; and, the general public. Individuals and agencies involved in the planning process are listed in Table 7-1.

Table 7-1
Plan Update Participants

Agency/Organization/Entity	Representative
B & W Charters Inc.	Gene Wright II
Battle Creek Area Transportation Study	Pat Karr
Battle Creek Transit	Richard Werner
Calhoun County Resident	Michael Dickert
Calhoun County Resident	Wilford Fullerton
Calhoun County Resident	Pam Namest
Calhoun County Senior Services	Carl Gibson
City of Marshall Dial-a-Ride	Jerry Hutchison
Community Action	Charles Asher/Teri Maisner
Community Inclusive Recreation	Jim Pearl
Concorde Transportation	Kevin Patrick
Dean Trailways of Michigan	Nichole Enz
Disability Network Southwest Michigan	Michele McGowen
Marion E. Burch Adult Day Care Center	Kris Jenkins
Michigan Department of Human Services – Calhoun County	Justin Logsdon
Summit Pointe	Dawn Nichols
The Salvation Army	

On November 17, 2014 a letter was sent to transportation/human service providers within Calhoun County soliciting agency input. The survey information requested included description of services being provided as well as goals, strategies, and potential projects along with any current gaps in service that they could identify. Information was also posted on the City of Battle Creek Website, Battle Creek Transit's social media page, downtown transfer station shelters, and Battle Creek Transit's vehicles soliciting public input on gaps in transportation in Calhoun County as well as potential goals, strategies, and projects. We then followed up with respondents and provided them with the listing of potential projects submitted and requested that they prioritize these within short-term, mid-term, and long-term status.

All information received from agencies and public participants, as well as 2010 Census Data was then compiled into a draft plan. On March 13, 2015, the draft plan was sent to the agencies and public individuals who had responded to the survey requesting that final comments on the overall plan be submitted by March 27, 2015. Only one response on how the process should proceed in the on future was received and indicated they felt it was not necessary to meet annually but maybe email annual updates instead. They suggested that participants should handle the projects they can

do on their own first and then maybe partner with other entities or companies in order to facilitate the projects that require assistance.

On April 23, 2015 participating individuals were notified that the final draft plan is viewable on Battle Creek Transit's website (www.battlecreekmi.gov/living), or for those without internet access, a copy was provided to them. The final draft version was forwarded to Michigan Department of Transportation on April 23, 2015 for review and approval.